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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
30 October 1966

State Department review completed

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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HIGHLIGHTS

Heavy fighting erupted this weekend between North Vietnamese Army regulars and elements of the US 4th Infantry Division in the western highlands along the Cambodian border. Communist forces launched five company-sized attacks against several US field positions near the Plei Djereng Special Forces camp in a 15-hour period. Farther south, US 1st Infantry Division units operating in Binh Duong and Binh Long provinces also reported a series of sharp engagements with Communist forces on 28 October.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: North Vietnamese Army forces launched five-company-sized or larger attacks early this weekend against elements of the US 4th Infantry Division conducting Operation PAUL REVERE IV in the western highlands of Pleiku and Kontum provinces (Paras. 1-2). US 1st Infantry Division Operation SHENANDOAH reported killing 71 enemy troops during a series of sharp engagements near the Binh Duong - Binh Long Province border on 28 October (Para. 3). US Marines have favorably terminated Operation MACON, a four-month clearing, security, and pacification mission south-east of Da Nang (Para. 4). Viet Cong saboteurs were apparently responsible for the explosions at a major US ammunition depot northeast of Saigon on 28 October (Paras. 5-7). Widespread Communist terrorism and sabotage is anticipated in the Saigon area on 1 November (Paras. 8-9). A captured document has revealed enemy manpower problems on Viet Cong Military Region VII (Paras. 10-12). [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] withdrawal of Viet Cong main force units from the southern delta to reinforce the Communist units in central Vietnam (Para. 13).

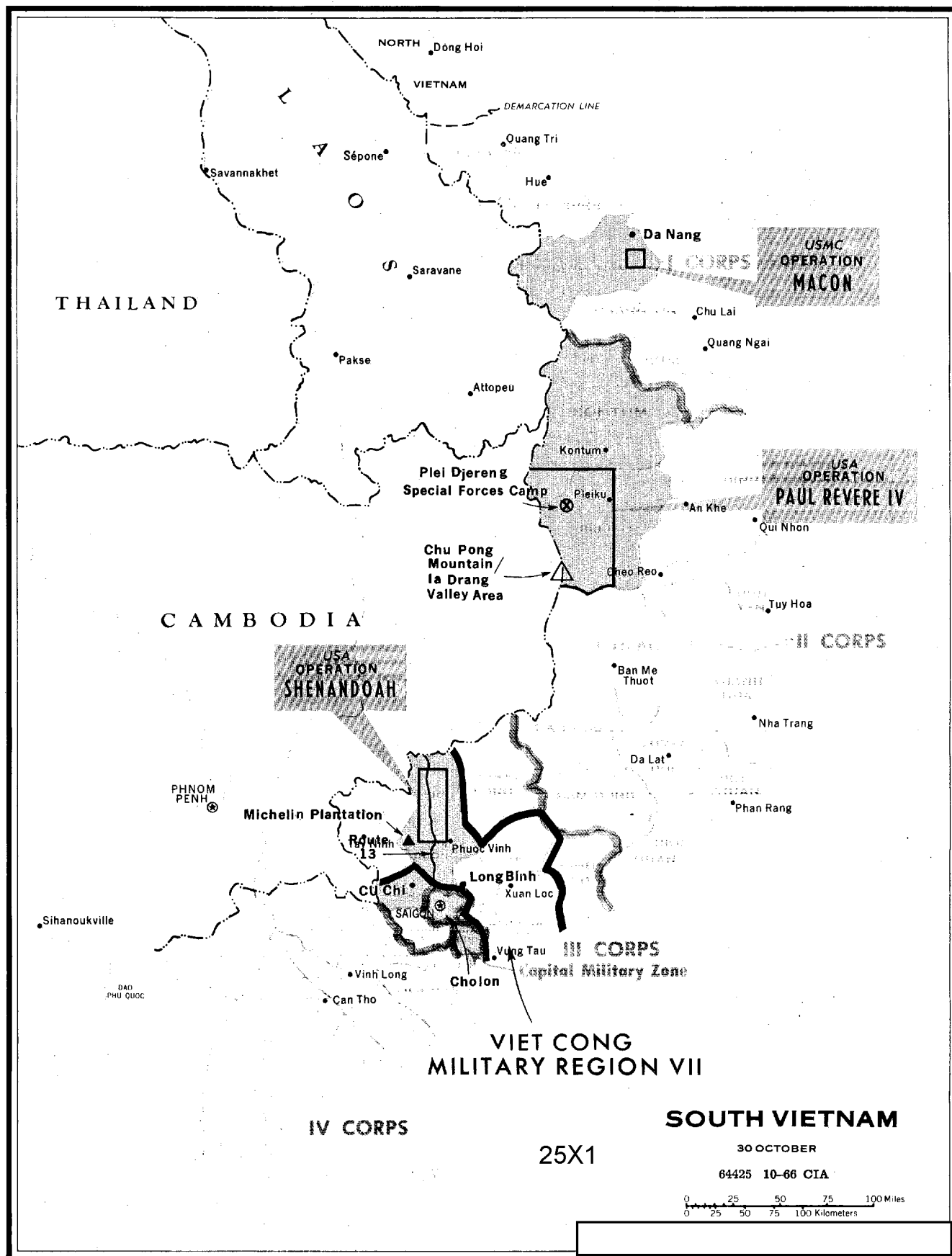
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The Ky government has released a number of political prisoners as a first step in an effort to conciliate Catholic and moderate Buddhist elements (Paras. 1-3).

Buddhist supreme patriarch has reportedly confirmed the appointment of a militant monk to replace Tam Chau as head of Buddhist Institute (Para. 4). Premier Ky's 30 October speech emphasized that Manila Conference represented a reaffirmation of existing policies (Paras. 5-6).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Heavy fighting erupted this weekend between North Vietnamese Army regulars and elements of the US 4th Infantry Division during the conduct of Operation PAUL REVERE IV along the Cambodian border in northwestern Pleiku and southwestern Kontum provinces. During a 15-hour period spanning 28 and 29 October, Communist forces launched five company-sized or larger attacks, against the defense perimeters of several US company-strength field positions in an area six to 15 miles west-northwest of Plei Djereng Special Forces camp. According to preliminary casualty reports, ten Americans were killed and 43 wounded, as against known enemy losses of 58 killed and three captured. Four US helicopters flying medical evacuation and resupply missions in support of the engaged US infantrymen were down by enemy ground fire, with three reported as completely destroyed.

2. Large-scale Communist offensive activity has been anticipated in this area since at least mid-September, when major elements [redacted] were first detected [redacted] in a major deployment from their normal base of operations in the Chu Pong Mountain/Ia Drang Valley area of southwestern Pleiku Province northward to the southwestern Kontum/northwestern Pleiku region. [redacted]

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3. Elements of four battalions of the US 1st Infantry Division participating in Operation SHENANDOAH, a reconnaissance-in-force ground sweep in northern Binh Duong and adjacent Binh Long Province, reported a series of sharp engagements with a Communist force of undetermined strength on 28 October. The heaviest action was centered in an area of dense jungle terrain some four miles northeast of the Michelin Rubber Plantation and seven miles west of Highway 13. Seventy-one Viet Cong/North Vietnamese

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Army troops were killed, as against US losses of five killed and eight wounded.

4. US Marines have favorably terminated Operation MACON, a combined clearing, security, and pacification mission conducted since early July in an area centered about 16 miles southeast of Da Nang, in Quang Nam Province. More than 500 Communist troops were killed in the four-month offensive, in contrast to American casualties of 24 killed and 172 wounded.

Viet Cong Sabotage Revealed At Long Binh Ammunition Depot

5. Further investigation of the 28 October explosions at a major US ammunition depot on the northeastern outskirts of Saigon has revealed Viet Cong responsibility for the incident. The Liberation News Agency also boasted that the Viet Cong were responsible for the explosions.

6. It now appears that a roving US security patrol was attacked by an unknown number of Viet Cong inside the depot just prior to the explosions. A reaction force moving to aid the patrol observed fires burning between two ammunition stacks. Shortly thereafter, three mortar rounds landed in the storage area, producing one large and several secondary explosions. The blasts blew a 40-foot crater in the ammunition pad and scattered unfuzed 8-inch howitzer projectiles throughout the area. US casualties were initially placed at two killed and nine wounded.

7. On 29 October ordinance disposal units discovered an unexploded satchel charge

which serves as a major source of supply for US combat forces operating in the III Corps area (principally the US 1st and 25th Infantry divisions), was reopened on 29 October.

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Planned Viet Cong Terrorist Activity in Saigon Area
On 1 November

8. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] a Viet Cong special operations unit is expected to begin widespread sabotage operations in the Saigon area on 1 November in an effort to disrupt Vietnamese National Day ceremonies. Enemy terrorists will reportedly operate throughout Cholon, the Chinese section of the capital. MACV headquarters, the MACV billet at the Capitol Hotel, and the 5th National Police precinct are the major targets. One sabotage squad has reportedly been assigned to move explosives through Gia Dinh Province to the capital on 30 and 31 October.

9. On 30 October, GVN National Police arrested a five-man Viet Cong sapper (demolition) team entering Saigon from the direction of Cu Chi, Hau Nghia Province, with 500 pounds of plastic explosives.

Manpower Problems in Viet Cong Military Units

10. A Viet Cong report analyzing troop strength in Viet Cong Region VII in 1965 indicates that although provincial and regional units had shown an over-all increase of 34 percent for the year, village guerrilla and district units had declined 14 and 23 percent respectively. The document written by the deputy chief of staff for the region made it apparent that the increases in the regional and provincial units had been partly at the expense of district and village formations, which customarily supply trained soldiers to higher echelon units by the process of "upgrading."

11. The document also stated that hamlet guerrilla units had increased 21 percent during the year, but that these could not be upgraded to the village level because the hamlet guerrillas were "technically weak." The report predicted that unless village guerrilla units were "expanded widely" to provide a steady source of replacements, the development of region and province forces would encounter "many difficulties" during 1966.

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12. At least one source has suggested that the document's forecast was reasonably correct. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] defected from the Viet Cong 5th Division--which frequently operates in MR VII--said that the division was having considerable difficulty in keeping up to strength because of lack of adequate replacements. The 5th Division attempted to maintain strength through use of North Vietnamese as fillers, and by taking recruits directly into the division from training depots.

13. Low-level reports from VC-controlled areas in the delta have again indicated the withdrawal of VC main force units from the delta to the west-central highlands. One unverified report indicates that the VC Western Nambo Party Committee has ordered such a transfer of regular troops under its command, has instructed its local organizations to replace them with local guerrilla units, and has started recruiting new draftees to replace the guerrillas. A similar transfer of main force units from the delta area to the north was reported during late 1964 and 1965. It is believed that some transfers on a selected basis did take place at that time.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Ky government has released a number of political prisoners as a first step in an effort to conciliate Catholic and Buddhist elements.

2. Several prominent officials in the Diem government were released this weekend as a gesture of reconciliation prior to 1 November national day celebrations marking the overthrow of Diem. Among those freed was Than Kim Tuyen, the head of Diem's secret police and a long-standing target of Buddhist opposition. Tuyen's release was described as "provisional," however, since he still faces prosecution on a number of unspecified charges.

3. At the same time, the government apparently attempted to placate the Buddhists by announcing the forthcoming release of 300 "well behaved" prisoners. Although they were not further identified, most of these prisoners are believed to be Buddhists who played a minor role in the abortive "struggle Movement" insurrection early this year.

Buddhist Affairs

4. The press reports that the Buddhist supreme patriarch today confirmed the appointment of Thien Hoa, a militant antigovernment monk, to replace moderate Tam Chau as chairman of the Buddhist Institute. Moderate Buddhist sources reportedly are challenging the patriarch's authority in this matter and have indicated that Tam Chau is prepared to fight to keep his post.

Premier Ky's Speech on Manila Conference

5. Premier Ky's 30 October broadcast to the nation on the results of the Manila Conference was couched in conservative language and emphasized that the meeting represented a reaffirmation of existing policies. Ky said that his government had won the "sympathy and enthusiastic support of all the allies" for seeking a democratic and peaceful South Vietnam free of Communist aggression. He asserted that there could be no "cease fire" while the Communists persisted in sabotage and terrorism, and that Vietnam's allies

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had "once again" demonstrated the will to fight until the Communists cease their aggression. He indicated that the allies would not withdraw their troops until the Communists were beaten.

6. Ky devoted a major portion of the speech to an appeal for national unity, stressing its importance in the struggle against the Communists. He said that the recent release of political prisoners was made in the interest of national solidarity, and that he was pleased with the progress of the constituent assembly toward the goal of "complete democracy."

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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